

A Bit of Me

This series of profiles on SUNY Broome community members is a part of the Student Village diversity calendar initiative. We will be highlighting members in our community who identify with or can speak on the diversity theme or topic for each month.

The theme for April is Culture and the topic is Do we interpret other people's behaviors through our own?

To be featured in this series please reach out to Kalis Nunes .

Christina Thompson

Resident Assistant at the Student Village



WHAT IS YOUR CULTURAL BACKGROUND AND IN YOUR OPINION WHAT IS THE MOST DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC OF IT?

When my mother was born she was adopted into a Irish-Italian family. Thanks to 23 & Me I found out that I was 45% Irish. However even though I'm not biologically Italian I still considered Italian to be in my cultural background since that's what I grew up around. My Nana's (derived from the Italian word for grandmother, Nonna) family is Italian and my Papa's (grandfathers) family is Irish. My Nana and Papa all lived in the same city as most of my Nana's family. So I spent a majority of my time around the Italian side of the

family. In my opinion I would have to say the most defining characteristic of Italians is that we are very family-oriented. For holidays, birthdays, and any other celebrations there is always a gathering. But not just some small get together. At the gathering there will be my Nana & Papa, my siblings and I along with my mom and her husband, my two aunts with their husbands and children, four of my Nana's cousins with their spouses, children, grandchildren, and their children's spouses, and grandchildren. So as you can see it's a pretty big gathering and you better not forget to invite anyone.

HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED CULTURE SHOCK AND IF YES CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE?

Yes, I have experienced culture shock multiple times in my life as I love to travel to different countries. The most significant culture shock experience I have had was probably going to college and living in Student Village. I went to grade school in a small predominantly white village. I wasn't really exposed to other cultures outside of me traveling. When I got to the Student Village I was astounded by the diversity of the residents. I thought it was cool that in just one building there were Jamacians, Dominicans, Ghanaians, Russians, African Americans, and so many more different nationalities. I was really excited to learn more from my peers.

HAVE YOU BEEN TO OTHER COUNTRIES? IF SO THEN WHERE?

Throughout my life I have been to Canada, Panama, and Costa Rica. I have been to Canada multiple times mostly staying around the Niagara Falls area. When I was in 6th grade my Nana and Papa took my cousin Michael and I to Panama to visit my Papa's brother. We stayed for a week and some highlights of the trip was seeing the Panama Canal, and ziplining. Then in my junior year in high school I went to Costa Rica with the travel club at school. I stayed for ten days. Some highlights were planting a tree, ziplining, and eating all the different foods especially the fruit. It was mostly rice and beans but I loved it and if I were to go back there that is the first thing I would get to eat. The next place I want to travel to is Nicaragua.



WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT YOU THINK IS YOUR CULTURES GIFT TO THE WORLD?

THE FOOD. I'm not talking about the pasta, you get it the box okay. I'm talking about HANDMADE pasta. One of my favorite memories that I will have with my Nana is when she would make the meatballs for the pasta she would put them on a plate and after they would cool down a bit I would take one off the plate and eat it plain. I could eat those forever and just typing about it now is making me crave it.

IF SOMEONE WAS VISITING YOUR COUNTRY FOR THE FIRST TIME WHAT IS SOME ADVICE THAT YOU WOULD GIVE THEM TO HELP THEM FIT IN?

If someone was visiting the United States of America for the first time my advice to them would be that they should be accepting of any and all cultures that they might encounter during their visit. The United States is considered to be one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world so during their visit they most likely will encounter many different cultures.

WHAT IS AN IMPORTANT CUSTOM FROM YOUR CULTURE?

An important custom for my culture is religion. My family is Catholic. It is expected that you are baptized and then when you're old enough you go to church school and get your first reconciliation, your first communion, and then confirmation. I did all of this growing up along with going to church every Sunday. Going to church was especially important during times like Christmas, and Easter. My family was very involved in the church. I was a church school teacher along with my Mom and Nana. My mom at one point was the director for the church school. In church my sister and I were both altar girls. My sister and Mom were also eucharists. As I got older I got less involved in the church but my Mom is still very involved.

IF YOU HAD TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF WITH A SONG, WHAT SONG WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

If I had to describe myself with a song I would choose Fight Song by Rachel Platten. I chose this song because when something is not right I speak up whether you like it or not. Even if I am standing alone. I can relate to the "small boat" in the song because I look really young for my age and I am a woman. Meaning I'm not taken very seriously at first glance. However, if there's a problem, I can and I will "make an explosion" or shine the light on it to bring attention to it very quickly.

WHAT IS YOUR DREAM HOME?

My dream home is a double wide on a nice piece of land. It may seem weird to some but I grew up in a big house and I didn't really like it.



WHAT IS YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND?

In 2019, I graduated with my Advanced Regents high school diploma from Hannibal High School in Hannibal, NY. In about two weeks I will be graduating from SUNY Broome with an Individual Studies Associates in Science. I will be transferring to SUNY Oswego to major in Political Science.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS POLITICAL SCIENCE?

I choose to study Political Science because of the work I do with the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation (CFF). When I was 9 my cousin Heather passed away from Cystic Fibrosis. In honor of Heather, Heather's Army was created for an event that the CFF puts on each year called Great Strides. At Great Strides teams walk to raise money and awareness for Cystic Fibrosis. I was a team member of Heather's Army for 3 years before I became Team Leader. When I turned 16 the local CFF chapter presented me with an awesome opportunity to attend the CFF Teen Advocacy Day (TAD) in Washington D.C. At TAD one day you learn about the current bills in Congress that are relevant to the Cystic Fibrosis community. Then the next day you go on Capitol Hill and have a day full of meetings with members from Congress and you talk about those bills and why they should vote yea or nay on those bills. My first time going I fell absolutely in love with the policy work, advocating, and Capitol Hill. I went again when I was 18 and I was still in love with it. That was my confirmation of wanting to pursue a career in Political Science.

